and it is something I have been hoping to do for some time."

"Congratulations, Y'Grace," the butler replied, "an' there's champagne on ice in Your Grace's study."

The Duke walked ahead. Luella found herself in a very attractive room at the back of the house which overlooked a garden. There were shelves of books which Luella knew her father would have enjoyed reading. The Duke gave her a glass of champagne and the butler brought some lemonade for Enrico. " 'Rico want . . go back to . . beeg horses," he was saying.

"Perhaps tomorrow," Luella said, "His Grace will let you go and look at the horses he has in the mews." She glanced at the Duke as she spoke. She thought that once again she was imposing on his good nature.

"He shall certainly see the horses," he replied, "and if we have to be in London long, as I suspect we will, I will hire a pony that he can ride."

Luella was astonished. At the same time, she could only say: "Thank . . you! Thank you very . . much!"

It was later, when she had washed and changed her gown, that she came downstairs alone. A young housemaid had been told to look after Enrico. He was playing with some toys which had apparently belonged to one of the late Duke's sons. Luella found the Duke alone in the study and she said to him: "Could I please speak to you about Enrico?"

"Of course," he replied. He had been sitting at his desk when she entered, studying a pile of documents and letters. He rose and walked towards the fireplace.

"I am worried," Luella began in a small voice, "in case the Ambassador, when he learns . . why he came to . . England, simply sends him back to Milan . . and to Signor Vecchio."

The Duke did not say anything, and she went on quickly: "You have . . told me how wicked and evil he is! I am sure therefore . . that he has no real interest in . . the little boy . . and perhaps . . now that his mother is dead . . he will be . . ill-treated . . or left to . . s.starve."

Still the Duke did not say anything and she looked at him pleadingly as she said: "I . . I could not . . bear that to happen and I would rather . . look after him . . myself . . which I can do if my father's book is . . published." She paused a moment before she finished: "I shall then have . . some money . . but perhaps in the meantime . . I could . . borrow a little from you . . and I promise I will . . pay you back."

The Duke raised his eyebrows. "Do you really intend to saddle yourself with an Italian child who, if you are telling me the truth, you had never seen until a few days ago?"

"I *am* telling you . . the truth," Luella said. "Enrico is a dear little boy and he has been well brought up. I could not . . bear him to be . . unhappy. He has very . . good manners . . and at table he behaves as well as . . you or I do."

"What you are implying," the Duke said in a hard voice, "is that his father, whoever he may be, must have been a gentleman."

"I suppose our . . instincts and . . whatever qualities we are born with show themselves as soon as we . .